

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 PM-07 NSC-10 SPC-03 SS-20 RSC-01

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P R 291415Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6795

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY FREETOWN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BLANTYRE 129

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, RH

SUBJ: UNITED METHODIST CHURCH CONFERENCE

REF: BLANTYRE 113 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT BANDA HAS BANNED UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
CONFERENCES IN MALAWI SAYING GATHERING POLITICAL RATHER THAN
"RELIGIOUS." PRESIDENT BELIEVES COINCIDENCE OF PRESENCE OF
BISHOP MUZOREWA AND SIR ALEC DOUGLAS-HOME GIVES EVENT POLITICAL
COLORATION. BISHOPS FROM NINE AFRICAN COUNTRIES AND US
SHIFTING CONFERENCE TO SALISBURY. THEY HIGHLY CRITICAL THIS
REVERSAL PREVIOUS VERBAL APPROVAL BY GOM. SMITH HAS TELEPHONED
TO SAY CONFEREES MOST WELCOME. END SUMMARY.

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1. EMBOFF INFORMED JAN 28 BY AMCIT METHODIST MISSIONARY LAY WORKER THAT PRESIDENT BANDA REFUSED PERMISSION FOR TWO UNITED METHODIST CHURCH CONFERENCES SCHEDULED FOR BLANTYRE JAN 30 - FEB 6 ON GROUNDS MEETINGS POLITICAL RATHER THAN "RELIGIOUS." BISHOPS AND CHURCH OFFICERS FROM US AND NINE AFRICAN COUNTRIES INCLUDING BISHOP MUZOREWA SCHEDULED TO ATTEND. PRESIDENT BELIEVES PRESENCE IN MALAWI AT SAME TIME OF BISHOP MUZOREWA WHO ARRIVED IN BLANTYRE FROM RHODESIA JAN 28 AND OF SIR ALEC DOUGLAS-HOME WHO SCHEDULED VISIT FEB 2/3 BOUND TO GIVE METHODIST GATHERING POLITICAL CAST.

2. ACCORDING TO SOURCE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH BOARD SEVERAL MONTHS AGO DESIGNATED REV DENNIS MYAMUROWA, RHODESIAN, AND 10 YEARS RESIDENT OF MALAWI IN CHARGE OF BIBLE SOCIETY OFFICE HERE TO ORGANIZE CONFERENCE. REV MYAMUROWA MET SEVERAL TIMES WITH MUWALO NQUMAYO, MINISTER OF STATE IN PRESIDENT'S OFFICE, AND RECEIVED VERBAL APPROVAL FROM MUWALO FOR CONFERENCE. ON MORNING JAN 26 AFTER BISHOPS AND CHURCH OFFICERS HAD STARTED TO ARRIVE, REV MYAMUROWA AND AMCIT SOURCE WERE SUMMONED BY EDSON PHAKAMEA, PERMANENT SECRETARY (ADMINISTRATION), OFFICE OF PRESIDENT. AFTER REQUESTING NAMES OF ALL DELEGATES, PHAKAMEA STATED PRESIDENT BANDA'S APPROVAL FOR CONFERENCE NOT GRANTED. WHEN REV MYAMUROWA REFERRED TO MUWALO'S APPROVAL FOR CONFERENCE OVER MONTH AGO, PHAKAMEA REJOINED THAT PRESIDENT BANDA WAS ONLY PERSON WHO COULD DECIDE MATTER OF THIS NATURE IN MALAWI. REV MYAMUROWA WAS TOLD PRESIDENT CONSIDERED CONFERENCE POLITICAL RATHER THAN "RELIGIOUS" AND SUGGESTED DELEGATES RETURN TO THEIR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES.

3. IN ATTEMPT TO SALVAGE CONFERENCE AFTER HIS ARRIVAL IN BLANTYRE, MUZOREWA OFFERED TO DEPART IMMEDIATELY HOPING THIS WOULD ERASE "POLITICAL" COLORATION OF CONFERENCE. WORD CONVEYED TO HIM THAT PRESIDENT'S DECISION AGAINST HOLDING CONFERENCE WOULD STAND IN ANY CASE.

4. IN THIS SITUATION DELEGATES DECIDED MOVE CONFERENCE TO SALISBURY. BISHOP MUZOREWA AND OTHER RHODESIANS FLYING SALISBURY JAN 29. BISHOPS FROM US, ANGOLA, KENYA, LIBERIA, MOZAMBIQUE, SIERRA LEONE, SOUTH AFRICA, TANZANIA, ZAIRE AND ZAMBIA EXPECTED FOLLOW JAN 30. BISHOPS HIGHLY CRITICAL OF PRESIDENT BANDA.
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5. AMBASSADOR SPOKE WITH BISHOP MUZOREWA IN HOTEL LOBBY JAN 28 AND AT SAME TIME MET OTHER METHODIST BISHOPS AND OFFICERS WHO HAD ARRIVED. (AMERICAN BISHOPS NOT YET IN TOWN.) OPEN MEETING BETWEEN BISHOP AND AMBASSADOR DECIDED UPON AS PREFERABLE TO PROBABLY UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT MEET PRIVATELY.

6. AMBASSADOR FOUND MUZOREWA AND OTHER BISHOPS AND OFFICERS

BADLY DISAPPOINTED AT SUDDEN AND UNEXPECTED TURN OF EVENTS. MUZOREWA SAID LENGTHY PREPARATIONS HAD GONE INTO CONFERENCE WHICH WAS FIRST MEETING OF UNITED METHODIST CHURCH BISHOPS FROM ALL PARTS OF AFRICA AND US. PURPOSE STRICTLY RELIGIOUS, TO DISCUSS AND PLAN ROLE OF CHURCH IN AFRICA.

7. MUZOREWA EMPHASIZED HIS VISIT AND SIR ALEC'S PURE COINCIDENCE. HOWEVER, RHODESIAN PRESS HAVING FIELD DAY PREDICTING MEETING BETWEEN MUZOREWA AND SIR ALEC. MALAWI GOVERNMENT HAD "GONE THROUGH THE ROOF" FEARING REACTIONS AND PRESSURES FROM OTHER AFRICAN STATES AT PROSPECTS FOR SUCH MEETING. CHARGES MADE THAT METHODIST CONFERENCE WAS CAREFULLY CONTRIVED CAMOUFLAGE FOR MEETING WITH SIR ALEC.

8. MUZOREWA TOLD AMBASSADOR RHODESIAN REGIME ON PREVIOUS OCCASION ASSURED HIM IT WOULD AGREE TO CONFERENCE IN SALISBURY. BISHOPS RECOGNIZED DIFFICULTIES LOCALE COULD CAUSE ESPECIALLY FOR CERTAIN AFRICAN COLLEAGUES. EMBOFF OFFICER INFORMED JAN 29 SMITH TELEPHONED DELEGATES TODAY SAYING THEY WELCOME HOLD CONFERENCE IN SALISBURY AND WOULD RECEIVE SPECIAL TREATMENT INCLUDING WAIVER OF VISA REQUIREMENT. WE UNDERSTAND SALISBURY PRESS CARRYING BANNER HEADLINE READING "BANDA BANS MUZOREWA."

9. COMMENT: PRESIDENT BANDA'S DECISION WITHDRAW PERMISSION FOR CONFERENCE IS MOST UNFORTUNATE. IT UNLIKELY MUWALO WOULD HAVE GIVEN VERBAL APPROVAL WITHOUT PRESIDENT'S KNOWLEDGE. WE ACCEPT MUZOREWA'S ASSERTION THAT TIMING HIS VISIT AND SIR ALEC'S COINCIDENTAL ALTHOUGH BISHOP MAY HAVE SOUGHT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS FACTOR TO SEEK MEETING. PRESIDENT BANDA ACTED HASTILY AS HE HAS TENDENCY TO DO WITH INADEQUATE CONSIDERATION OF POSSIBLE FOREIGN REACTIONS.
BURDETT

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